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# Progress Through Marginalization: Jewish Women at the Forefront of the German Women's Movement

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## Abstract

German-Jewish women of the late 19th century found themselves sidelined on three fronts. As women in a traditionally patriarchal German society, German-Jewish women were generally limited to the domestic sphere. As Jews in a patriotic German society, German-Jewish women faced virulent anti-Semitism and Judeo-phobia. And finally, as women in the Jewish community, German-Jewish women were demoted to an inferior status in religious practice. This paper explores the tri-marginalization of Jewish-German women of the Kaiserreich era. Furthermore, this paper argues that tri-marginalization pushed Jewish-German women to the forefront of the German women's movement. German-Jewish women's tremendous progression, especially as compared to their German female counterparts, arose primarily through their ability to push boundaries from within the confines of their relegated community.

## Author's Note

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Despite being triply oppressed, as women within the Jewish community, as women within German society, and as Jews within Germany, Jewish women managed to join and lead women's movements in disproportionate numbers. From 1871 to the early 1930s, Jewish women not only participated in, but also advanced the state of German womanhood, redefining modern Jewish female identity along the way. However, as scholars such as Marion Kaplan and Paula Hyman have discussed, despite a recent surge of gendered Holocaust study, the history of German Jewish women prior to 1933 is a largely unexplored area. Many Jewish women during the *Kaiserreich* and through the interwar years were at the forefront of Germany's feminist movement – not only through activism, but also through their tremendous overrepresentation in male-dominated institutions. These women occupied this forefront position despite their marginalization as Jews in an anti-Semitic German society and as women in a patriarchal community. However, Jewish female progression did not arise from their rebellions against this marginalization and stigmatization. Instead, the consequences of the German-Jewish emancipation put Jewish women in a better position than their German counterparts to capitalize on the triumphs of the women's movement. Furthermore, institutionalized German anti-Semitism indirectly forced Jewish women to enter into groundbreaking positions.

Marion Kaplan describes Jewish-German women during the *Kaiserreich* as existing "in a ghetto within a ghetto."<sup>1</sup> The first metaphorical "ghetto" refers to the Jewish community. While German Jews were legally emancipated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, German Judeo-phobia and anti-Jewish sentiment inhibited Jews from fully entering the social sphere.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, with World War I and the economic depression came a rise of virulent political and societal anti-Semitism.<sup>3</sup> Jewish women, as members of the Jewish community, were barred from civil service professions, featured

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<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 168.

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 238.

in anti-Semitic publications, and viewed as an alien group in a national society.<sup>4</sup> The second "ghetto" is the ghetto of women within the Jewish community. The *Torah* and *Talmud* (a text that documents Jewish ritual law and practice) demote women to an inferior status both in the synagogue and in Jewish worship.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, while most German Jews of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not strictly follow the laws of traditional Judaism, Jewish women were still limited to their domestic responsibilities. Women's education was secondary to their dowries, and prioritized below their brother's education.<sup>6</sup> Jewish women thus faced prejudice because of their inclusion in the Jewish community, and were simultaneously marginalized within the Jewish community itself.

This double marginalization is accompanied by yet another form of marginalization. Outside of the Jewish community, German women lived in a patriarchal society based on the gender-specific division of labor.<sup>7</sup> Men worked in the outside world, while women supposedly made the home into an island of serenity for their husbands and children.<sup>8</sup> German women were somewhat emancipated in the early 1900's, when Prussian universities began accepting women<sup>9</sup> and when a ban on women's political organization was abolished.<sup>10</sup> Yet, much like the Jewish emancipation, legal acceptance did not automatically grant social acceptance. Women in universities were stigmatized, as shown by professors who would unjustifiably penalize their female students.<sup>11</sup> Sexism in universities was so deeply ingrained that most German Jewish women encountered greater discrimination based on gender than on religious affiliation.<sup>12</sup> However, Jewish women were still at a greater

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<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 230.

<sup>6</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 141.

<sup>7</sup> Pfister, Gertrud and Niewerth, Toni, "Jewish Women in Gymnastics and Sport in Germany, 1898-1938," 290.

<sup>8</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 229.

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 143.

<sup>10</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 230.

<sup>11</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 138.

<sup>12</sup> Freidenreich, "Jewish Women Physicians in Central Europe in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," 87.

disadvantage than other German women, as anti-Semitism also existed within the universities. The example of female university groups is telling. German university women formed sororities in order to create solidarity within sexist institutions. However, these women's groups became anti-Semitic.<sup>13</sup> Jewish women thus faced intense sexism supplemented by anti-Semitic undertones.<sup>14</sup>

Jewish German women were marginalized as Jews by the largely anti-Semitic German society, as women by a patriarchal society, and as Jewish-women by the male-dominated Jewish community. One could rationally assume that in response to this tri-marginalization, Jewish women would fade into the background in an attempt to evade and limit these forms of prejudice. In many instances, Rabbis and Jewish leaders avoided the spotlight and refrained from activism in order to minimize anti-Semitic judgments.<sup>15</sup> However, not all Jewish German women hid in the domestic; throughout the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish women in Germany were at the forefront of the feminist movement and women's education. In her book, *A Price Below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals*, Naomi Shepherd describes the impetus behind Jewish women's sudden march to the forefront of feminist and political movements. Through seven historical accounts of "rebellious" women, she argues that Jewish women came into the public eye through their rebellions against class, Judaism, and tradition.<sup>16</sup> These women cast off their religious and cultural frameworks in order to shape new and radical futures.<sup>17</sup> In addition to Jewish female rebels from Russia and Belarus, the book features German Jewish women like Rosa Luxemburg, a leader of a communist organization in Berlin, and Bertha Pappenheim, leader of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (The League of Jewish Women). While Shepherd's book does make important points about individual Jewish female leaders, it overestimates the rebellious

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<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 148.

<sup>14</sup> Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 227.

<sup>15</sup> Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 227.

<sup>16</sup> Nadell, "A Price below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals," 322.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

spirit of Jewish women during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The large majority of German Jewish women, including Bertha Pappenheim, challenged the status quo by working within their communal and social frameworks. These women were best situated to advance forward due to their unique and privileged position following the Jewish emancipation.

The emancipation of German Jewry was a distinctive and unparalleled process in which the majority of German Jews jumped from poverty to affluence.<sup>18</sup> Simone Lässig outlines the reasons behind this swift Jewish rise to the middle class. Emancipation in Germany was a top-down process; it would be legally granted only when all Jews had undergone bourgeois improvement.<sup>19</sup> This prerequisite to emancipation pushed Jews to strive for *Bürgerlichkeit*, the cultural values that characterized the bourgeois way of life and education.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, German Jews pushed to acquire social and cultural capital, allowing them to eventually gain economic capital. By the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews had undergone a nearly collective shift to the middle and upper middle classes, and had cultivated bourgeois values, high social status, and financial success.<sup>21</sup> Upon fulfilling these requirements, the Jews were granted emancipation in 1871. Three decades later, women began raising issues about the state of German womanhood, bringing the state of the German woman to the surface of Germany's social and political agenda.<sup>22</sup> In 1900, women's status was raised above minors.<sup>23</sup> Helene Stocker, a non-Jewish woman who founded the League for the Protection of Mothers, argued for the necessity of a women's movement in the early 1900s. She claimed:

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<sup>18</sup> Lässig, "How German Jewry Turned Bourgeois," 61.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 135, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>22</sup> Pfister, Gertrud and Niewerth, Toni, "Jewish Women in Gymnastics and Sport in Germany, 1898-1938," 290.

<sup>23</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 230.

Thus far the question of education...has been of most importance in the women's movement...only those who are sufficiently trained for the domestic and mental struggle can hope to win.<sup>24</sup>

Stocker believed that women's education was the key to the success of the German women's movement. After 1865, the movement suffered "a long period of incubation" due to the Laws Restricting Associations and the Anti-Socialist Laws, which disrupted existing organizations, banned publications, and expelled leaders.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the movement pushed *only* for women's education, rather than for the vote like other European women's movements. This focus on education led to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century rise of elite girls' schools. Additionally, in 1908, Prussian universities began admitting women, making them the last nation in Europe to do so.<sup>26</sup> Jewish German women, with the backdrop of the Jewish emancipation, were in the unique position to partake in their newly granted access to education.

While Prussian universities officially accepted all women, middle class women of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had the best opportunity to obtain a higher education simply because they could afford university expenses. Furthermore, middle class women were not as tightly bound to the home as lower class women. With more money, they could afford servants and appliances, which limited their household responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> Without the burden of menial labor and time-consuming tasks, middle class women were free to cultivate new interests and define themselves outside the boundaries of the home.<sup>28</sup> This freedom sparked women's desire to obtain an education, and their high socioeconomic standing allowed them to pursue a degree. German Jewish women, who were predominantly members of the middle class, were in this same position to capitalize on newly granted access to education.

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<sup>24</sup> Stocker, "The Women's Movement in Germany."

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard, Ute, "The Women's Movement in Germany in an International Context," 106, 109.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The backdrop of the Jewish emancipation, combined with new opportunities for women, placed Jewish women in a better position to obtain an education than other middle class women. In order to fully integrate into German society and assert their worth, Jews were especially keen on achieving the social status accorded to those with *bildung*.<sup>29</sup> The concept of *bildung* was central to bourgeois culture and mentality, calling for the personal cultivation, internal improvement, and refining of the intellect through education.<sup>30</sup> In the pursuit of *bildung*, Jewish families aspired for high culture and placed a premium on providing their sons with the best available education.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, "to a greater extent than their Christian counterparts, Jewish families in central Europe sought to obtain the best education they could afford for their daughters as well as their sons."<sup>32</sup> In order to firmly establish their bourgeois status, Jews granted their daughters' desires for education more generously than other Germans.<sup>33</sup> The German Jewish need to achieve the bourgeois ideal often exceeded the need to fully practice Jewish law. Furthermore, because many German Jews followed Reform Judaism, they tended not to be taught Hebrew, but rather, Modern Languages and business practices. This assisted in mitigating the effects of Jewish women's *halakhic* marginalization. Other factors contributed to Jewish women's high education rates. Jews were the first religious group in Germany to practice the use of birth control widely.<sup>34</sup> With fewer children, Jewish women were able to invest more time in their education. The Jewish veneration for learning did not just arise from the conditions of the emancipation; rather, education and learning had always been a core Jewish value.<sup>35</sup> A combination of the Jewish veneration for learning, lowered fertility

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<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Swales, "The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mannby," by W. H. Bruford, and *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, by Peter Hanns Reill," 372.

<sup>31</sup> Freidenreich, "Jewish Women Physicians in Central Europe in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," 83.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 137.

<sup>34</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 137.

rates, financial capital and desired upward mobility caused Jewish women to be at the forefront of women's education in Germany. Although Jews made up only 4% of Berlin's population in 1906, 20% of girls in private and public schools were Jewish.<sup>36</sup> Jewish women were also overrepresented in universities.<sup>37</sup>

Jewish women not only received an education at a higher rate than other women, but they were also disproportionately represented in women's athletics. In the interwar period, there were higher rates of Jewish women in gymnastics groups than of non-Jewish women; the percentage of female members of the Jewish *Makkabikreis* group was 38% as opposed to 20% of women in the non-Jewish equivalent, the *Deutsche Turnerschaft*.<sup>38</sup> High rates of Jewish women athletes led to high rates of athletic success. In the 1920's, Jewish German women were amongst the highest-ranking female tennis players.<sup>39</sup> The number of Jewish female athletes comes as a surprise, as female athletics were looked down upon during this time period, and the general sentiment was that "womenfolk should not be 'masculinized' through physical education, but should strive after health...within the borders of femininity."<sup>40</sup> As German Jews so eagerly sought social acceptance, fathers would presumably forbid their daughters from engaging in socially unacceptable activity. While this was often the case, the prevalence of Jewish German women in sports again came as a result of the privileged Jewish position just following the Jewish emancipation. With abundant leisure-time, Jewish women embraced athletics as a new hobby. Furthermore, their middle-class standing enabled them to pay for gymnastics classes and tennis lessons.<sup>41</sup> Jewish girls also used athletics as a way to assert that they belonged in society, joining German teams and

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<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 138.

<sup>37</sup> Freidenreich, *Female, Jewish, and Educated*, xv.

<sup>38</sup> Pfister, Gertrud and Niewerth, Toni, "Jewish Women in Gymnastics and Sport in Germany, 1898-1938," 298.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.



improving their athletic ability in order to prove their equality.<sup>42</sup> By defying sexist warnings disapproval of women's athletics, these Jewish female tennis players, gymnasts and skaters indirectly contributed to the goals of the women's movement. It is important to note that this groundbreaking work did not stem from an intentional rebellion against Judaism or class; instead, these women used their privileges from the Jewish emancipation in order to prove their worth as Germans.

The Jewish emancipation not only granted women leisure-time and financial capital, but it also had profound effects on the status of Jewish German women within the Jewish community and in *halakhah*. In traditional Judaism, men were the authorities on *halakhah* and observance. Furthermore, as men were responsible for attending synagogue services on a daily basis, they were also responsible for the leadership and cultivation of the Jewish community.<sup>43</sup> Women were alternatively the keepers of the home, removed from the realities of the outer Jewish world. Yet, with the emancipation and subsequent desire to acculturate, Jewish religious observance waned. This is because men strived for upward social mobility and German acceptance, making it difficult to perform, maintain, and prioritize religious duties.<sup>44</sup> In effect, male-dominated religious authority was replaced with female-dominated religious authority. As Judaism drifted to the background, women were charged with the preservation of religion and culture, and therefore felt responsible for the furthering of Judaism.<sup>45</sup> As women were still predominantly keepers of the home, they could continue to practice Judaism and maintain their attachments to religion without enduring the pressures of the outside world. This made it so that women were the last defenders of dietary laws and other traditions, just as men and rabbis had traditionally been.<sup>46</sup> In this way, a secondary consequence of the

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<sup>42</sup> Pfister, Gertrud and Niewerth, Toni, "Jewish Women in Gymnastics and Sport in Germany, 1898-1938," 294.

<sup>43</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 230.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>45</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 11, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 231-2.

Jewish emancipation was Jewish women's encroachment upon a formerly male-dominated domain.

Despite women's crucial role as preservers and authorities on Judaism, women were still denied an equal role in the Jewish community.<sup>47</sup> In response to this issue, the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (JFB) sought to achieve Jewish women's equal voting and leadership rights within the community or *Gemeinde*. Marion Kaplan highlights the centrality of this goal in the JFB's platform, saying that "the *Jüdischer Frauenbund's* campaign for the vote in the Jewish community was based as much on the need to have women serve the *Gemeinde*...as it was on women's rights."<sup>48</sup> As advocates for women's rights both in the Jewish community and in society at large, members of the JFB demonstrated Jewish women's distinct opportunity to spearhead the feminist movement. The Jewish emancipation provided German Jewish women with a bourgeois status, ample leisure time, high education, and new opportunities, such as the chance to become religious authorities. These factors both enabled and encouraged Jewish women to engage in "social feminism." Social feminism was the ideal approach to the German women's movement, which unlike American feminism, recognized natural differences between the sexes and demanded equal possibility rather than equality.<sup>49</sup> Adhering to this German ideology, the JFB achieved marked success in the women's movement through a mixture of social work and feminism, which was moderate and ladylike, but also insistent and determined.<sup>50</sup> This success is displayed in the JFB's numbers: the group attracted 20-25% of eligible women in the Jewish population, in contrast to Germany's largest feminist organization (the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*) that registered 7% of eligible German women.<sup>51</sup> This made the JFB the largest organizational member of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* and one of the leading feminist

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<sup>47</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

organizations of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany.<sup>52</sup> This achievement however did not come from radicalism; while the JFB was revolutionary in its demand for the Jewish women's vote, it was not rebellious against Jewish law or practice. The organization rather stressed and urged religious observance, and even attempted to draw assimilated Jewish women back into the religious community.<sup>53</sup> The organization used their privileged status and dogged determination to push for the women's vote from within the confines of the Jewish community.

The JFB's goal to minimize anti-Semitism displays its commitment to Jewish tradition and the Jewish community. While German Jewish women's ample leisure time and the desire to achieve the women's vote in the Jewish community contributed to the JFB's success, other factors contributed to the size of the organization. Under the leadership of Bertha Pappenheim, the JFB attracted members through their active anti-white slavery campaigns, focused on reducing the traffic of Jewish Eastern European women sex-workers.<sup>54</sup> However, one of the driving-forces behind the establishment of the JFB was the fear of pervading anti-Semitism.<sup>55</sup> Many Jewish women joined the JFB rather than the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* because central to the JFB's platform was the goal to combat anti-Semitism directly.<sup>56</sup> Anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish family life, which was Jewish women's domain, encouraged Jewish women to conduct defense of the Jewish community for the first time.<sup>57</sup> These anti-Semitic attacks, as the basis for the founding of the JFB and as the reason for such high registration rates, in effect caused one of the largest and most reputable feminist organizations to arise in Germany. Bertha Pappenheim and the JFB became renowned leaders in the international anti-trafficking movement because anti-Semitism gave them fervent members and strength in numbers.

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<sup>52</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 277.

<sup>55</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany*, 20-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 223.

Much like the case of the JFB, the prevalence of pioneering Jewish women activists, workers, and doctors was often an inadvertent byproduct of German anti-Semitism. Despite Jewish emancipation, officially sanctioned anti-Semitism barred Jews from the civil service and university careers.<sup>58</sup> Yet, it was institutionalized anti-Semitism that indirectly gave Jewish women an advantage in newly acceptable women's jobs. Because Jewish men could not work for the government or in academia, they worked in business, commerce and trade.<sup>59</sup> In order to maintain the high standard of Jewish living, forty percent of these self-run family businesses unofficially employed wives and daughters to perform organizational work.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, jobs like secretaries and stenotypists started becoming more acceptable and popular. Jewish women were in the best position to get these jobs because they had years of training and experience in their family businesses.<sup>61</sup> A combination of Jewish women's traditional role as family assistants and the ability for Jewish families to educate their daughters caused Jewish women to be overrepresented in the "commerce and trade" industries.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, while most German women worked in agriculture and industry, "Jewish women were at the forefront of modern urban life in their 'traditional' jobs, leading the way to careers that were later considered the prototypes of 'new' female occupations."<sup>63</sup> Jewish women thus laid the groundwork for what was to be a new sphere of women's societal involvement. One must not underestimate Jewish women's ambition in advancing women's position in the German workforce. However, it is important to recognize that anti-Semitic legislation was the initial factor that pushed Jewish women into groundbreaking work.

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<sup>58</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 144.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 155, 157.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

In addition to their achievements in commerce and trade, Jewish women were overrepresented in science, math, and medicine.<sup>64</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the prevailing German attitude toward women in medicine was extremely negative; medicine was seen as an “unfeminine” and even immoral career for women.<sup>65</sup> Despite this, 59% percent of university-educated Jewish German women studied medicine, science, and math as opposed to 37% of German women,<sup>66</sup> two-thirds of the first 18 women to receive medical degrees in Vienna were Jewish, and Jewish women comprised one-fifth of female physicians in central Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup> Many scholars have attributed the high rate of Jewish female doctors to socio-economic privilege. As medical degrees were more expensive and required more years of schooling, German Jews were in a better position to support their daughter’s medical pursuits.<sup>68</sup> While Jewish financial capital is a reason behind the prevalence of Jewish female doctors, the argument does not fully explain the overwhelming statistics or take the many Jewish female doctors that came from large families into account. While financial capability was an important element permitting Jewish women to pursue careers in medicine and science, the existence of anti-Semitism, which barred Jewish women from alternative career paths, also played a key role.<sup>69</sup> At this time, teaching was by far the most popular career choice for university women. Patriotic and nationalistic classes such as German, history, and religion were the subjects’ advocated for female teachers; they were thus encouraged and expected to be “attuned to the fatherland.”<sup>70</sup> Anti-Semites argued that Jews could not possibly convey the essence of German nationalism to their students, causing Jewish women to be denied teaching positions in most schools.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, government

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<sup>64</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 141.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>67</sup> Freidenreich, “Jewish Women Physicians in Central Europe in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” 79-80.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 182.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

civil service regulations gave Jewish women dismal employment prospects in public schools.<sup>72</sup> These two anti-Semitic stumbling blocks forced Jewish women to find alternatives to the stereotypical female career in education. Jewish women entered medicine, a "free profession" without government regulations, as a way to increase their job prospects amidst institutionalized anti-Semitism.<sup>73</sup> Anti-Semitism pushed Jewish women to enter into the progressive field of science at a higher rate than German women, who could easily become teachers.

While Jewish women could get jobs in medicine more easily than in teaching, it was still difficult for female physicians to find employment in a male-dominated field.<sup>74</sup> Jewish women who had already received degrees in medicine faced an unfavorable job market, and were thus forced to create their own niche within the medical community. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish female doctors found this niche in the psychoanalytic movement. Jewish women physicians – even more so than Jewish male physicians – dominated the emerging and revolutionary fields of psychotherapy and psychology.<sup>75</sup> These women were also involved in gynecology and the sex reform movement, advocating for the widespread availability of contraception and abortion.<sup>76</sup> Jewish female doctors were thus markedly different from their German counterparts, who, for the most part, specialized in pediatrics.<sup>77</sup> Anti-Semitic and sexist prejudice pushed Jewish female doctors out of the more traditional fields of medicine and into the more progressive areas, like the developing field of psychology and areas in which they promoted the use of contraceptives.<sup>78</sup>

German historian and sociologist Theresa Wobbe asserted: "the women's movement in the *Kaiserreich* was inconceivable without the

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<sup>72</sup> Freidenreich, "Jewish Women Physicians in Central Europe in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," 86.

<sup>73</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 182.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>76</sup> Skolnik, "Women: Modern Western and Central Europe," 180.

<sup>77</sup> Freidenreich, "Jewish Women Physicians in Central Europe in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," 90.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

activities and pioneering of Jewish women.”<sup>79</sup> The accomplishments of the nationally acclaimed JFB form the basis of this claim, as the organization made headway in anti-white slavery campaigns and fought for women’s equal opportunity. However, individual Jewish women who disregarded German sexism to become athletes, physicians, traders, and university educated also contributed to the strength of the women’s movement. It is tempting to argue that these women mobilized in a fight against their tri-marginalized status. However, the pioneering of Jewish women stemmed more from their tri-marginalized position than from rebellions against their subordination. Asserting that the consequences of emancipation and anti-Semitism pushed women to the forefront of the women’s movement in no way detracts from the importance of these women’s actions and their ambitions. This model of cause-and-effect instead places these women into the historical context of the *Kaiserreich*, and sheds light on how German policies reshaped Jewish religion, gender constructs, and ideology.

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<sup>79</sup> Pfister, Gertrud and Niewerth, Toni, “Jewish Women in Gymnastics and Sport in Germany, 1898-1938,” 292.

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